

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO BERT DORAN

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 18, 2010

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Bert Doran, a World War II Marine Corps veteran from Boone, Iowa, and to express my appreciation for his dedication and commitment to his country.

The Boone News Republican is currently running a series of articles that honors one Boone County veteran every Tuesday from Memorial Day to Veterans Day. Bert Doran was recognized on Tuesday, October 26. Below is the article in its entirety:

BOONE COUNTY VETERANS: BERT DORAN

(By Greg Eckstrom)

"I was lucky I lived."

The sentence came from Bert Doran, a Marine Corps veteran who served in World War II under harsh fighting. He was injured in Iwo Jima after three days of fighting in which half of his company was killed. Doran, however, isn't exactly one to go down without a fight.

It's that spirit that drove the 19½ year old who was born in South Dakota and moved to Boone at age 7 to join the military. Some guys he knew said they were going to do it, and Doran decided he wanted to do it, too. The reason he picked the Marine Corps as his branch of choice was a decision explained just as easily.

"It's supposed to be an elite outfit, so it's what I picked," he said.

United States Marine Corps, third division, ninth regiment, third battalion, K company was where Doran ended up, and after signing up he was sent to California for boot camp.

Boot camp was in San Diego, followed by training at a portion of Camp Pendleton up in the hills, "where all the snakes were," Doran said.

Boot camp was, as a bit of an understatement, tough.

"Boot camp was some of the toughest training," he said. "It was 8 weeks, and I had to stay an extra two weeks because I couldn't swim."

Tough was also a definition, also an understatement, that fit Doran, though.

"I decided I was going to make it through it, so I did," he said. "I lost a lot of weight after I went through boot camp."

Leaving Camp Pendleton, Doran was next sent overseas to Guam for further training.

"It was supposed to be secured, but we had an eight day push to the jungles to clean out what was left," he said. "It was thick jungle. We had to use knives to chop through."

There were also plenty of snakes in the jungle . . . although after time in the hills in Camp Pendleton, Doran was used to this.

It was January of 1944 that Doran left Guam. Arriving at Iwo Jima on Feb. 26, 1945, he was greeted with fierce fighting.

"We were actually pinned down," he said. "About half the company had been killed. We had to wait for replacements. The captain was killed the first day, my platoon lieutenant was killed the first day. About 200 in the company. About half of them were killed the first day."

After three days of fighting, Doran was in a foxhole with two other men when a mortar shell hit.

"It killed the one guy," he said. "I don't know what happened to the other one. I probably was temporarily knocked out, and then I pushed up through . . . The guys from the next foxhole came out and pulled me out, put a tourniquet on my arm. Then I was carried out of there."

The soil at Iwo Jima was composed nearly entirely of volcanic ash.

"That's what that whole island was," Doran said. "My face was completely full of it."

Details are fuzzy for Doran, as he was on morphine at the time, but he remembers being shipped out on a hospital ship, sent to Saipan, and then flown to the Hawaiian islands.

From there, after a month, he was sent to a hospital in Oakland, Calif., and finally to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, where he stayed for 11 months.

"It was kind of a blur after I was wounded," he said.

The blast had put so much volcanic ash into him that he had lost his eyesight. He said that at first, he could see a little light, but after a surgery was attempted to correct his vision, he could see nothing.

"They said my eyes were so full of that volcanic ash that they couldn't see into them," he said. "That's the first thing I remembered at the hospital. One of their help was rubbing my face. Trying to get that ash out. I imagine it looked like a mask."

For the man that got through boot camp with grit and determination, however, his lost vision didn't seem to slow him down. In his time at the hospital he learned Braille, and even took a trip up to New York City with a group.

"They took us from there for a week up to New York to the Institute for the Blind in New York City, and we were there for a week," he said. "And they took us out to the big night clubs at night for eats and drinks. We met Guy Lombardo at the Roosevelt Hotel."

He also married his wife, who was from Ogden, during a furlough. When he went back to Philadelphia Naval Hospital, his wife came with him and got a job at the facility.

It was at the hospital that Doran was presented with the Purple Heart for his service to his country.

After being discharged from the service, Doran received training at the Veterans Hospital in Des Moines on how to make rugs—a task he picked up quickly and enjoyed for years.

"I made rugs and that kind of stuff for 25 years," he said. "I've got to liking it."

Doran also keeps in contact with the men of K company—sending out Christmas cards to a list that has slowly been dwindling as the years go on. These days, he sends out about 10–12 cards each year to men from the company.

Billie Ellis, who works for Boone County Public Health, helps Doran out at home, and knowing him for 25 years she describes him as a perfectionist.

"He was a perfectionist and he still is," she said. "He likes everything done right."

Over the years, the ash has been taken from Doran's face, although one piece next to his nose did develop into cancer.

"They told me right before the surgery that a lot of them don't live through the surgery, so that didn't sound very good," he said.

A lot of people don't live through the surgery, but even fewer survive a mortar shell landing in their foxhole. Doran went through the 11½ hour surgery 25 years ago without problems. After all, having survived Iwo Jima, cancer is just another challenge to overcome.

Now, looking back on his time in the service, Doran vividly recalls stories of his service with sharp clarity. He claims that the military taught him discipline, and he's proud of joining a legacy of military service in his family—having had a brother, John F. Doran, fight in the Battle of the Bulge and his father serve in the Army during World War I.

These days, Doran said, the military is different. Soldiers now use technologically advanced weapons. The soldiers that are fighting, however, don't seem to have changed much. Ellis has a son that just joined the Marine Corps. When he was seen off, in addition to family members, Doran was there as well. After all, Marines support each other—both in WWII and today.

"He wished my son good luck," Ellis said. "They always talk about the Marines."

I commend Bert Doran for his many years of loyalty and service to our great Nation. It is an immense honor to represent him in the United States Congress, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHAPTER 227 OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 18, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, it is my great honor to recognize the 25th Anniversary of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 227. Founded in 1978, Vietnam Veterans of America, VVA, is the only national veterans organization exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. Currently, there are 46 state councils and 630 local chapters with more than 50,000 individual members. VVA's goals are to promote and support issues that are important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans.

One local chapter, VVA Chapter 227, serves the needs of Vietnam veterans who live in Northern Virginia, and I commend them for their dedication and commitment to our veterans. Chapter 227 was founded in 1985 with 15 people meeting at the NCO club at Fort Myer. Since then, the chapter has grown and continues to be an engaged and active asset in the community.

Chapter services include providing support to homeless veterans, assisting in maintaining the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, awarding the Vince Kaspar Prizes

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